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EDITORIALS*

IMPORTANCE OF PERSONNEL IN METROPOLITAN HEALTH BOARDS AND OFFICERS

How San Francisco Recently Selected Its Health Officer.—In the August CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE (pages 319 and 328) comment was made on the manner in which the city of San Francisco had seen fit to go about the task of selecting a successor to its former well-known health officer, the late William C. Hassler. In the letter which was sent to CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE by the secretary of the Western Branch of the Public Health Association it was stated that Mayor Angelo Rossi

"almost immediately following Doctor Hassler's death, instructed the Board of Health by memorandum that political affiliations and party lines should be laid aside in seeking a successor to Doctor Hassler. . . .

"He suggested the appointment of an advisory committee, consisting of the deans of the University of California and Stanford Medical Schools, the president of the San Francisco County Medical Society, the chairman of the San Francisco Health Council, and others, to consult with the board in the selection of the best candidate. The above advisory committee, after careful study of the functions of a municipal health department and the qualifications presented by some ten candidates, unanimously recommended Doctor Geiger."

In commenting on the appointment of Dr. Jacob C. Geiger of the Hooper Foundation of

* Editorials on subjects of scientific and clinical interest, contributed by members of the California Medical Association, are printed in the Medicine Today column which follows.

Medical Research, the San Francisco *Chronicle* printed the following:

"In the selection of Doctor Geiger neither politics nor influence played any part. Guarding the health of our population is too serious a problem to admit of any criterion in the selection of a health officer other than outstanding and recognized ability in this highly specialized department of medical science."

* * *

The San Francisco Policy Was in Harmony With Modern Public Health Viewpoints.—Mention is again made of the above because the course pursued and the action taken in these matters, in striving to keep the San Francisco public health work and its health commissioner out of the domain of ordinary civil politics, is a policy which probably has the almost unanimous endorsement of members of the medical profession and also of all lay citizens who understand the significance and importance of public health work.

San Francisco, in proceeding as it did, acted wisely and in accordance with modern day concepts of public health standards; and for this action received the commendation of public health authorities from all parts of the United States. The example set was worthy of emulation, and one would naturally have expected that the action taken would have been taken to heart, in California at least.

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A More Recent Vacancy in the Position of Health Officer of Los Angeles.—The opportunity to profit by the San Francisco example soon and unexpectedly presented itself in another California city, for before the month of October came to a close a vacancy occurred in the position of health officer of California's southern metropolis, Los Angeles.

The events leading up to that vacancy will not be here discussed, because there is no wish to become involved in an exposition of the respective personal merits of the former and present health officers of the city of Los Angeles. We are here concerned with basic and important principles having to do with the organization of state and local public health departments and their relation to the medical profession. Our comments are presented with such intent.

The Los Angeles city board of health, for several years past composed entirely of laymen, saw fit, through the action of a majority of its members at its meeting on October 27, to dismiss the then health officer, and to immediately appoint his successor.

Such procedure was certainly in strong contrast to the course which had been followed in San Francisco, as above outlined.

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Comments of a Lay Newspaper on the Method of Appointment.—Some editorial comments in the Los Angeles *Evening Express* would seem worthy of place here, because they represent a viewpoint to which the medical profession probably gives assent. Quotation follows:

" . . . When the opportunity was afforded, by discharge of Health Officer George Parrish, to secure